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Confusilated and Complexified

Neither of these words, *confusilated* and *complexified,* are in the dictionary. They are two words coined by a friend which we have frequently heard him use.

The meaning of these two terms will be easily inferred. To be *confusilated* is to be mentally mixed up on some specific problem. To *complexify* something is to make something more complex than it is or need be.

This issue of PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM is largely devoted to three representative instances of *confusilation* and *complexification* among groups not untouched by vanity in regard to their "Calvinism."

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Reverend Gerrit Hoeksema on: It Has Not Been Proven from Scripture to be Sin

On Saturday, June 19, 1954 the Synod of the Christian Reformed church was nearing the end of its session in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The subject under discussion was the construction of Calvin College buildings (and other denominational buildings) by "closed shop" contractors.

Large buildings, as for a college, require large construction contractors. Most large contractors have, voluntarily or under coercion, agreed with American Federation of Labor unions to have a closed shop. A closed shop means that that contractor will not hire you unless you first join a particular union. If you will not join, then employment by that contractor is barred to you. You will not, then, be hired to work on any construction job awarded to that contractor who has, voluntarily or of necessity, accepted a closed shop as demanded by the union. Most unions in the construction trades have traditionally been AFL (American Federation of Labor).

An "open shop" means that you can get a job and hold it without being compelled to join a union. There are some small open shop construction contractors. The big contractors with very few exceptions have generally been forced or intimidated into accepting a closed shop, or they may have voluntarily agreed to it in order to force up costs of competitors.

Naturally, on big college contracts it is difficult to get a General Contractor who can get *all* his subcontractors to operate on an open shop basis. If a single necessary subcontractor operates on an AFL closed shop basis, his men will not work on any job where there are non-AFL workers employed by any of the other subcontractors. Big jobs become then, almost always, completely closed shop jobs.

From a *practical* standpoint, under the given circumstances on June 19, 1954, it appeared reasonable to argue that to attempt to build Calvin College buildings on an open shop basis was impracticable even in a city as Grand Rapids which is one-third

Dutch. (However, see Appendix at end of this article.) It could be argued that a big job would "have to go" AFL, that is, closed shop. It may have appeared to the Synod of the Christian Reformed church that it was hardly the time and the place to argue a *basic* question when a *specific* contract was not far in the offing, and while prior pronouncements by the denomination on the "principle" involved — the principle of the validity of a closed shop — had never been definite and bold or, as some people would say, honest.

Sensible (?) people adjust to practical necessities. They bend with the wind. Synod might have decided to instruct its Boards when constructing buildings to tolerate a closed shop *of necessity.* Then if that had been accompanied by going on record that the closed shop was an evil, then at least there would have been a "witness" against an evil.

But with excellent timing an influential preacher takes the floor, and says: The closed shop has not been proven from Scripture to be sin. The speaker was the Reverend Gerrit Hoeksema, president of the Calvin College and Seminary Board of Trustees.

Hoeksema's apparent reasoning was very simple:

1. What has not been proven from Scripture to be sin may not be forbidden (major premise);
2. The closed shop has not been proven from Scripture to be sin (minor premise);
3. Therefore, the closed shop may not be forbidden (conclusion).

Hoeksema's argument was reported in *The Grand Rapids Press* as follows:

Says "Sin" Not Issue

Rev. Gerrit Hoeksema of Chicago, president of the Calvin board of trustees, said the basic issue was whether or not the closed shop was sin. He said that this has not been proven from Scripture, it has not been the stand of the church and that the church is in no position to take this stand since it permits members of the AFL and CIO to be members of church and members of consistories.

> If the closed shop is not sin, he said, we must leave our boards free to ask for bids in accordance with their best Christian judgment.

From the quotation it is clear Hoeksema gave three reasons for his position:

1. The closed shop has not been proven from Scripture to be sin;
2. To ban the closed shop is not at this juncture for our problem *practical;*
3. The church permits membership in the AFL and CIO unions.

We are at this time discussing *only* the proposition that the closed shop has not been proved from Scripture to be sin. The other reasons given by Hoeksema are worthy of separate treatment.

Hoeksema has long been a most powerful minister in the Christian Reformed church, if not always externally at least behind the scenes. He is an experienced man not far from retirement. He has been president of the Board of Trustees of Calvin College longer than any other man, and probably longer than any future term for anyone (the rules regarding tenure in office having been changed to prevent long tenures).

The circumstantial evidence, of course, is conclusive that Hoeksema does not believe that the closed shop *can* be proven from Scripture to be sin. On moot questions he has long been active and a dominant participant in the thickest of the fight. Undoubtedly, on a burning question such as the closed shop he has given it extensive thought and study. Beyond reasonable doubt, then, Hoeksema holds the opinion that not only the closed shop has not been proven from Scripture to be sin but also that the closed shop *cannot* be proved to be sin.

It is important then to note that Hoeksema does not limit his toleration of contracts to closed shop contractors to *practical* grounds. He proposes a policy on *moral* grounds, namely, that it has not been proved to be sin, and with the obvious implication that nobody has yet shown him that the closed shop is sin, and with

the inference that he does not believe anyone can show the closed shop to be sin.

Let us consider more carefully Hoeksema's "neat little syllogism," which has previously been quoted on page 179.

Hoeksema's Major Premise

Hoeksema's major premise (it is not quoted in the newspaper article but it is obviously what he holds) is: What has not been proven from Scripture to be sin may not be forbidden.

That is a big proposition. Its negative form adds to its force and gives the rule enormous application. Is it true that what cannot be shown to be sin according to Scripture may not be forbidden?

This is an old problem in the Christian Reformed church. There is nothing in Scripture which says a man may not be a member of the fraternal order known as the Free Masons. Nevertheless, the Christian Reformed church prohibits its members from being Masons. The refusal to permit dual membership, both in the Christian Reformed church and in the Masons, is because the church declares some of the religious and ethical declarations of the Masons conflict with Scripture (as interpreted by the Christian Reformed church), and on the basis of such an alleged inconsistency dual membership is prohibited. There is no specific reference in Scripture against the Masons. The Christian Reformed church objects to Masonry on *deduced* grounds. The church declares that there is something in Masonry which positively conflicts with Scripture. Hoeksema in this closed shop case then obviously holds that (1) there is no reference in Scripture to the closed shop (which is certainly true) and (2) there is no principle stated in Scripture which is against the closed shop (which may not be so true).

As we think it over we are under a strong inclination to agree with the major proposition in the Hoeksema syllogism, namely, that what is not proven from Scripture to be sin may not be forbidden.

In fact PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM might be expected to welcome that proposition. On pages 63-65 of the March, 1955 issue we represented a man's earthly life as consisting of his happiness, or the "pursuit of his self-regarding interests *without exploitation of the neighbor,*" and we finally equated that with "legitimate freedom." (This allows fully for the proper worship of God because the Scriptures certainly make clear that God does not want *coerced* but voluntary worship.) Nothing can be more fundamental than this in our thinking about the relation of man-to-man. PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM is unqualifiedly for freedom. Hoeksema's proposition appears also to be for freedom. Temporarily, at least, we let the proposition stand.

Hoeksema's Minor Premise

Hoeksema's minor premise is: The closed shop has not been proven from Scripture to be sin.

Whether that is true or not we do not know. We do not know what was *proven* and what was *not proven* at the Synod of 1954 of the Christian Reformed church. Maybe not one voice was lifted at the Synod against the closed shop on *moral* grounds. Maybe every argument advanced at the Synod of 1954 to show that the closed shop was sin was considered by Hoeksema to be a dud and to be advanced by people whose reasoning powers Hoeksema considered to be inadequate.

There were, however, strong objections at the 1954 Synod in regard to the closed shop. The news report in the daily newspaper previously quoted also wrote:

> Coming in the closing minutes of the annual synod of the denomination, the action on a report by Cornelius VanValkenburg leaves the church boards free to award building contracts to open shop or AFL contractors and skirted taking a stand on the closed shop issue which has troubled the church for years.
>
> * * *
>
> Observers called the decision the most surprising one of the two-week session since two large committees advocated a position which would have limited bidding on

church and college projects to contractors who would guarantee an open shop policy.

VanValkenburg spearheaded the fight for a hands-off policy. Although not a delegate to synod this year, he had been member of a 10-man study committee on the issue appointed by last year's synod. His minority report was rejected unanimously by the advisory committee on its report to the delegates. His presentation Friday afternoon, however, gathered support and finally won a 44-40 decision.

We come then to the conclusion that Hoeksema considered the majority report of the Study committee on the closed shop question and the report of the synodical Advisory committee both to have flunked out on any *moral* argument they presented against the closed shop. Maybe the minority report of the Study committee (the minority report was by attorney Cornelius VanValkenburg) showed that the closed shop could not be sin. (Unfortunately, we do not have either the majority report or the minority report of the Study committee, or the report of the synodical Advisory committee.)

Let us pass on from Hoeksema's low regard in respect to any moral argument presented at the Synod of 1954 against the closed shop.

But when we come to what undoubtedly was really Hoeksema's position, namely, the closed shop *cannot* be shown to be sin or the closed shop *is not* sin, then that is something entirely different.

In fact the proposition, the closed shop is not sin, is a notorious contradiction of what Scripture teaches.

What Sin Is There In The Closed Shop?

The ancient Hebrews considered the Ten Commandments a wholly remarkable piece of legislation, writ with the finger of God himself. They considered it completely comprehensive even though short. When a commandment said, thou shalt not kill, that did not mean to them that you could beat up a neighbor to an inch of death and then stop and say, "It has not been shown that I

sinned; the man is not dead. The commandment says only, thou shalt not kill, and I have not killed anybody. I am not a sinner."

As it was true for the ancient Hebrews, we also think very well of the Decalogue, and consider it marvelously short and magnificently comprehensive.

Consider the sixth commandment as explained in the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day XL:

> *What does God require in the sixth commandment?* That I, neither in thought, nor in word or gesture, much less in deed, dishonor, hate, wound, or kill my neighbor, whether by myself or by another, but lay aside all desire of revenge; moreover, that I harm not myself nor wilfully expose myself to any danger. Therefore, also the magistrate is armed with the sword to prevent murder.
>
> *But this commandment seems to speak only of murder?* In forbidding murder, God teaches us that He abhors the root of murder, as envy, hatred, anger, and desire of revenge; and that He accounts all these as murder.
>
> *But is it enough that we do not kill our neighbor in any such way?* No; for when God forbids envy, hatred, and anger, He commands us to love our neighbor as ourselves; to show patience, peace, meekness, mercy, and all kindness towards him, prevent his hurt as much as in us lies, and do good even to our enemies.

It is not debatable, therefore, according to this accepted "standard" among Calvinists that the sixth commandment forbids more than accomplished murder. It forbids murder and all violence and coercion (*except violence and coercion to resist evil*). That kind of violence and coercion (to resist evil) is not forbidden; it is eventually required. Anyone and everybody is authorized we believe eventually, when all other measures fail, to employ violence and coercion to restrain evil. God himself does just that. He authorizes the state to do just that. And there is nothing in Scripture which says that final *resistance to evil* by violent means is forbidden.

But — and this is important — ALL OTHER VIOLENCE AND COERCION IS FORBIDDEN AND IS SIN. There is no easier way to summarize what the Heidelberg Catechism says about the sixth commandment than to say, *it forbids all coercion,* except such eventual coercion as restrains evil, which specific coercion is permitted as an exception. We believe the commandment could have read: Thou shalt not coerce, or, Thou shalt not engage in violence. But then those statements would have to be qualified, by "except to restrain evil." Such qualifications however would be incongruous with the whole "tone" of the Decalogue. The qualification was fully implied by the use of the word, kill, which denotes evil. One word, *kill,* covered what would otherwise require *coerce except to restrain evil,* that is, one word does the work of five. We therefore consider the following two statements to be identical:

Thou shalt not *kill*

and

Thou shalt not *coerce, except to restrain evil.*

Moses used four words; the alternative requires eight.

The absence of *coercion* makes society voluntary, makes it free, makes it happy. The goal of love, the goal of freedom, is the absence of all coercion, except the eventual coercion to resist evil.

We believe in a *voluntary society.* We believe in a noncoercive society. We believe in meekness, forbearance, patience, persuasion in all ordinary affairs of life, and believe in resort to coercion and violence only as the *last* resort in order to restrain evil.

To say, thou shalt not kill, means to us, thou shalt not coerce, threaten, engage in violence, restrict a neighbor's freedom of choice.

Now, what is a closed shop?

A closed shop advertises itself as a means of coercion, and its practical record is studded with violence and crime. But forget about the actual record. Consider the *principle.* The principle of the closed shop is coercion. It is that by definition. A logician would say that the term, closed shop, indicates coercion *ex defini-*

tione. No further explanation is necessary; the term itself implies compulsion. If you will not join the union, we will not permit you to work. Join, or starve, if necessary.

That the closed shop is an unqualified evil is known to secular thinkers. Resistance to the principle of a closed shop is universal except among those who have something to gain by it, namely, labor racketeers, and those union members who are deluded by union propaganda into believing that the closed shop does them some good. (Exploding that delusion will be reserved to another occasion.) The laws of some lands have come to tolerate the closed shop only because coercion and threats were employed politically to get laws passed which tolerate the closed shop. The closed shop is, if there is anything clear in this world, a damnable iniquity, and a plain violation of the sixth commandment.

The alternative is equally obvious. If coercion *is* permissible in one thing, then it is permissible for all other things. The *coercion* principle — except to restrain evil, as Scripture defines — is either of universal application or it is to be universally condemned.

Let us take a completely parallel case of coercion — a business monopoly. Instead of employes "getting together" in unions to coerce someone by the exercise of power of some sort, the employers "get together" in a cartel, and coerce each other, their employes and their customers. That is known as a monopoly. It can be protected by iniquitous laws just as a corresponding union monopoly by means of a closed shop can be protected. Imagine Hoeksema getting up on the floor of a synod and declaring: It has not been proven from Scripture to be sin to organize a monopoly.

In earlier issues of PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM we have presented what we consider to be the plain teaching of Scripture in regard to the famous law, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. We presented as the most obvious and the most nondebatable explanation of that law that none of us is authorized to harm our neighbor, in fact, that it is positively forbidden. We declared that everything is free to us except sin, and that it is sin to coerce a neighbor except to use coercion to restrain his sin. But now we rub our eyes and fidget and pinch ourselves to be sure we are not

having a nightmare; here is the most influential minister in the Christian Reformed church, president of the Board of Trustees of Calvin College and Seminary, at the zenith of his career, speaking to the delegates elected under the prayers of the church to the most powerful legislating body in the denomination, and he declares to them: an institution, namely, the institution of the closed shop, which by definition and by its very nature is a coercive institution, that institution is not a plain violation of the sixth commandment, which reads, thou shalt not kill, and which in its basic meaning prohibits coercion; instead the speaker by implication placed that coercion in the hands of any man or group of men which wishes to control entirely how you are to earn your living for yourself and your children.

But our astonishment mounts. We again quote the newspaper report:

> The synod decided to "refrain from making a directive to any board regarding the right or wrong method of economic organization in employer-employe relations as a part of the contract involved in building projects and to refrain from stipulating a procedure that makes distinction in labor union affiliations based on mode of membership organization."

Not only did Hoeksema declare an immoral principle; the Synod accepted it!

As previously quoted (on page 183) the final vote stood 44-40 that an institution founded on coercion and advertising its coercive principle is not sin. In plain language, the persuasive words of Hoeksema that coercion has not been shown to be sin, and the implication that coercion can not be proven from Scripture to be sin, induced forty-four preachers and laymen to vote that the church should not take a stand on the question of coercion.

It has long been a matter of common observation that when something is positively and clearly wrong but is to be defended for some invalid reason that those in favor of the iniquity follow one of two policies: (1) they defend the iniquity; or (2) they refuse to permit a judgment, that is, they will not commit themselves regarding the iniquity and say, "That is debatable." To

protect an evil there is no better way of appearing prudent and of avoiding open defense of evil than

> to REFRAIN from making a directive to any board regarding the *right* or *wrong* method of economic organization in employer-employe relations . . . (Emphasis supplied.)

The Christian Reformed denomination abdicates deciding what is *right* and what is *wrong*. It "refrains" from a policy for itself as a denomination when having buildings built in which there will be prayers and Christian education and Christian literature published. And it "refrains" for only one reason; it is *afraid* to go on record against a notorious public evil and so silences itself. It will not issue a "directive." It will not go on record.

And note the last words of the formal decision of Synod:

> . . . and to refrain from stipulating a procedure that makes distinction in labor union affiliations based on mode of membership organization.

The issue is not, let it be noted, one kind of *voluntary* mode of membership versus another kind of voluntary mode of membership — that is the way it sounds — but the issue is between absolute coercion regarding membership or no job at all. It is not honest to declare the question to be one of "mode of membership."

In fact, carry to its natural and full consequences what the Christian Reformed church has solemnly and prayerfully legislated *and holds to to this day* (June 5, 1955) and then *coercion* can be applied all through society. Everything may be coerced — your job, your tastes, your leisure, and your religion. If you may be coerced on earning your living, why may you not be coerced on spending what you earn, and what you are to like, and on how to worship God, and all the rest. Coercion either is a universal principle, or it is no principle at all. The Christian Reformed church has simply legislated the principle of the police state, the principle that coercion is moral and can be universally applied.

The great issue between communism and historic Christianity can be expressed by saying that communism authorizes and believes in coercion for the *alleged* public good, and that Christianity pro-

hibits and condemns coercion of every kind (except to restrain violence, fraud and theft). The great economists in the history of mankind have all favored a *voluntary* society, that is, a non-coercive society. That is what they mean by the term, *voluntary*. The great rogues in the history of mankind have all gone on record in favor of coercion for the *alleged* public good. The Christian Reformed church "refrains" from committing itself on coercion.

When Jeroboam with the ten northern tribes rebelled from Rehoboam, son of Solomon, he feared political complications if his people went up to Jerusalem to worship at Solomon's magnificent temple. And he, therefore, set up two altars or sanctuaries, one at Dan and the other at Bethel. He did not intend to depart from the worship of Jehovah, but he decided that golden calves would be a good means for promoting that "worship." He undoubtedly told his people he was promoting the same, old true religion. The Christian Reformed church may declare that it is also following the same, old true religion, but it is also deviating as Jeroboam did. Jeroboam said, I shall worship Jehovah by means of calves; the Christian Reformed church says, We shall declare the law of God to be neutral on the question of coercion. Moses banned images; Jeroboam used them. Moses banned coercion; the Christian Reformed church says that it "refrains" from banning coercion. Undoubtedly, the Christian Reformed church is as truly worshipping the true God as Jeroboam did.

Until 1954 it is probable that the Christian Reformed people were suspicious if not hostile to being neutral on unscriptural coercion. The Study committee on closed shop contracts was against the closed shop, except one member. The special Advisory committee (acting only during the session of Synod) reported for the majority report against the VanValkenburg minority report. In other words, there still was a fairly good grasp on one of the first principles of morality, namely, the principle against coercion, until Hoeksema made the powerful argument based on, it has not been proven from Scripture to be sin, which clearly implied that nobody had been able to show *him* that it was sin, and that he had not been able to convince himself that it was sin, and that for all practical purposes he was endorsing the principle of coercion by labor unions. And it was not VanValkenburg who did it. He was not able to convince any of his fellow committee members,

nor was his minority report able to convince the Advisory committee which opposed his findings. The explanation was that a new fighter had entered the ring, Hoeksema. As Goliath went down before David so everything went down before the persuasiveness of Hoeksema. As a parliamentary feat the performance merits our unqualified admiration and astonishment. Only a parliamentary artist of the foremost rank, without a peer in the denomination, could have accomplished what he accomplished.

An Inquiry

Calvin Seminary in Grand Rapids teaches ethics, that is, it undoubtedly intends to teach the Scriptural principles of morality, the true law of brotherly love. All members of the Christian Reformed church are assessed to finance that seminary. The Calvin professor of ethics must have some opinion on the "ethics" of the closed shop. As the closed shop is a controversial and important issue what does the professor who teaches ethics at Calvin Seminary say about the closed shop? If he holds to the Nygrenian* definition of neighborly love, and believes in "authentic community," is that "authentic community" which he recommends manifested in the *coercion* of the closed shop — that is, is *love* manifested in that community in which you cannot earn a living except you join the union?

And what is the position of the other members of the faculty of that theological school, who are to teach and pray and inspire in buildings built (almost certainly) by contractors operating under a closed shop?

The faculty of Calvin College and Seminary publishes the *Calvin Forum.* That publication publishes articles about various question of morality. What has been written in the *Calvin Forum* about the closed shop? Is the assumption correct that complete silence since June, 1954 on the closed shop issue is because the editors of the *Calvin Forum* believe the closed shop cannot be proven from Scripture to be sin?

We are interested whether any who teach an *extended* definition of brotherly love, are also (at the same time that they are teaching such a sanctimonious definition of brotherly love) teach-

*See PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM, May, 1955, page 128.

ing that the *coercion* of the closed shop is a fine morality and a manifestation of that brotherly love.

Nota Bene (Note Well)

The foregoing analysis of the immorality of the closed shop is not an analysis of unionism. Unionism is not necessarily coercive; it happens usually to be coercive, but the definition itself of unionism does not make unionism coercive.

In the case of the closed shop it is different. The closed shop by its very nature, the closed shop *ex definitione,* is indeed and unavoidably coercive.

We should probably also add the following:

1. As we have stated in earlier issues of PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM, our use of events in the Christian Reformed church in order to call attention to its confused and un-Biblical positions is solely because we happen to be members of that denomination. We are of the opinion, however, that practically none of the other denominations can afford to throw stones. What denominations have courageously and Biblically gone on record against coercion as contrary to the obvious teaching of Scripture? The Christian Reformed church is not the only church which has the courage only to deal with an inconsequential individual member who has sinned, but is afraid to attack a popular and powerful *public* or group sin, as the closed shop.

There are undoubtedly many individuals in the Christian Reformed denomination and other denominations who are opposed to the closed shop. They are like the 7,000 in Elijah's time who had not bowed the knee to Baal. But such contemporaries nor their denominations are ready to declare themselves unequivocally against a powerful and dangerous *public* evil. The real significance of Elijah has always appeared to us to be that he had the courage to go on record against powerful and *public* sins. He was not a pussyfooter or a pollyanna about them. At any rate, let other denominations remember that people who live in glass houses should be careful about throwing stones.

2. Maybe we should add something else. Probably many churchmen are uninformed on the elementary idea that *coercion* is

(ignoring the scriptural exception) a violation of the sixth commandment and plain, downright sin. However, the idea that coercion is an evil is an old and widely accepted idea in social science circles. There they do not call it *sin*. They declare instead that coercion is not the suitable means to attain the declared objective. The *means* are inappropriate to the *end* sought. Such people oppose sin on purely rational grounds, which we consider to be one very valid ground.

3. We are reminded of what we quoted in the March issue from Machiavelli's *Discourses,* namely:

> To insure a long existence to religious sects or republics, it is necessary frequently to bring them back to their original principles.

We think there is conclusive proof (1) that the trend in the Christian Reformed church in regard to ethical ideas has been downward, (2) that it must be brought back to its pristine principles, and (3) that if it is not, it will become insignificant, and hypocritical and apostate.

Appendix

Since writing the foregoing, two pieces of news have come to our attention:

1. A protest against the closed shop decision in 1954 by two laymen of the Christian Reformed church and the decision of the 1955 Synod in regard to those protests; and
2. Information on the building situation in Grand Rapids at the present time (summer 1955).

Decision on the Closed Shop by the 1955 Synod of the Christian Reformed Church

The July 1, 1955 issue of *The Banner,* official weekly of the Christian Reformed church, gives the following information on page 805:

Protest Against Labor Policy of Synod of 1954

Two members of the First Church of South Holland, Illinois, protested against the decision of the Synod of 1954 on its labor policy in the awarding of contracts for denominational buildings. The protest was on two counts: formal procedure and the material aspect of the matter. *This Synod maintained that the Synod of 1954 was not in error in giving priority to the minority section of the Study Committee. As to the material side of the matter, Synod held, over against the contention of the protestants, that the Synod of 1954 did deal with the real issue and that the position of the protestants that this issue was "camouflaged under a barrage of considerations that were only indirectly connected with the problem" is not correct.*

The 1955 Synod has gone on record that the "real issue" was dealt with and settled in 1954!

Apparently still, *coercion is not sin;* then, coercion must be brotherly love, because certainly the Christian Reformed church teaches that brotherly love must be exercised; the closed shop must be a manifestation of brotherly love; and if the closed shop is brotherly love then the principle of coercion is brotherly love!

Grand Rapids Building Situation in Summer of 1955

The June 7, 1955 issue of *The Grand Rapids Press,* page 35, carried a news item on the letting of the contract for the new public Riverside Junior High School building.

Contract Let At Riverside

New Junior High to Be First Here Since '25

Contract for construction of Riverside Junior High school building, first such structure to be built in Grand Rapids in 30 years, was awarded Monday by the board of education to Baker-VanderVeen-DeYoung-Kraker Co., low bidder, at a figure of $964,000.

The contract was approved unanimously in spite of a request from Robert V. Coulter, vice president of the Grand Rapids Federation of Labor, that the board "take another look."

Charges "Exploitation"

Coulter, speaking also for the Grand Rapids Building and Construction Trades Council, charged that the board is "ignoring the very concept of an established and stable economy" and protested that the board was letting contracts to contractors who "exploit cheap labor." Coulter asked that in the future the board consider a policy of requiring that contractors maintain the "prevailing wage."

The June 16, 1955 issue of *The Grand Rapids Press* carried a news report under the title: "School 'Cheap Labor' Charge Lashed by CLA Spokesman." Excerpts from this article follow:

In a letter received by school Business Manager Harold P. Herrinton, Joseph Gritter, secretary of the CLA, commended the board for ignoring the AFL protest on awarding the contract for Riverside Junior High school contract and sharply challenged the federation's charges of substandard labor conditions among nonunion contractors.

In Gritter's letter he writes:

"The remarks made by Mr. Coulter . . . concerning cheap labor reflect not only on the contractors, but also on our organization, which has a contract with Baker, VanderVeen, DeYoung & Kraker Co. Labor costs of the general contractor are fully as high as those of others who bid on the job . . . (We have a union shop contract with exceptions for conscientious objectors.)"

* * *

I. J. VanKammen, school engineer, pointed out that of the 11 contracts let so far seven have been with union contractors and four with nonunion.

Two things may be noted:

1. The CLA itself (Christian Labor Association) has a "union contract" with a contractor. The only difference between a *closed shop contract* and a *union shop contract* is that a closed shop contract provides you cannot *get* a job without first joining the union; the union shop contract provides that you can get a job but *must* within a specified time join the union, or you cannot *keep* your job. In principle there is no difference whatever between a closed shop contract and a union shop contract. Both are coercive. Both are damnable iniquities. But note: the *Christian* Labor Association has signed a *union* shop contract with a building contractor! However, exceptions are apparently allowed for, by some arrangement for "conscientious objectors."

2. The second thing to be noted from the foregoing news items is that it is *practical* to have an open shop policy in Grand Rapids for the construction of large buildings. At least, million dollar *public* school buildings have been erected by contractors declared in the news article to be "nonunion."

F. N.

The Anti-Revolutionary Party; The Founder was Confusilated from the Beginning And Now They Seem to have made a Volte Face

The French words, *volte face,* mean an about face, a turn around, a change in direction of 180 degrees.

We have a letter from an acquaintance* in the Netherlands. His letter refers to the Free University of Amsterdam, the Calvinist school founded by Abraham Kuyper. A quotation from the letter follows:

> I think there are many people in this country too who do not understand the political *volte face* which the "Anti-revolutionaire party," the party of the Gereformeerd Kerk *par excellence,* has made. Many of the younger members,

*An acquaintance acquired through a secular connection.

> especially of the Free University professors, are nearly socialists. The pity is, it is so difficult to stop it, as the professors have a system of co-optation, that is, they themselves are choosing and promoting colleagues and successors. But I still hope that in the long run the good idea will win.

Our acquaintance in the Netherlands refers to a *volte face* — an about face at the Free University of Amsterdam. And he refers to a *volte face* in the direction of socialism and away from whatever the school favored or seemed to favor in times past.

Traditional Calvinism was naturally individualistic. The Calvinist immigrants who emigrated out of the Netherlands into the United States between the end of the Civil War and the end of the nineteenth century were not socialists, nor were they interventionists; they were individualists.* They believed in the Biblical law of love, thou shalt love thy neighbor *as thyself,* and had no interest in, thou shalt love thy neighbor according to his wishes, which is the socialist law.

With the turn of the century, however, there was a change; many of those who came later had been influenced by the ideas of Abraham Kuyper. Especially immigrants (for example, weavers from the textile industry) who came from the industrial area of the eastern part of the Netherlands talked a different language. They talked of a *menschwaardig bestaan,* which translated means a "standard of living worthy of a human being." They believed, as all interventionists do, that the state can and should support individuals! These were men, influenced by Kuyperian ideas, who basically had a different philosophy than native Americans. The earlier immigrants adjusted easily to the American philosophy of freedom and individualism; those who came later and held Kuyperian ideas were more genuinely *foreigners* in thought and outlook.

Recent immigrants represent ideas still more interventionist. To a typical American the ideas of many of these newcomers

*For meaning of terms, interventionists and indivdualists and socialists, see June, 1955 issue.

appear to be plain socialism. Apparently, those ideas are in line with what is taught at the Free University of Amsterdam. The immigrants, too, seem to represent a *volte face,* an about face; they have interventionist and socialist ideas, just the opposite of the individualist ideas of those who came 75 years ago.

The sober fact is that Anti-Revolutionary ideas never won any real battles against the main thrust of the French Revolution. The Anti-Revolutionary party's ideas about society were from the beginning confusilated.

In what follows we attempt to put the problem in perspective as we see it. In doing so we surprise ourselves by ending with a different conclusion than our Dutch correspondent. He apparently believes that the Anti-Revolutionary party has made a genuine *volte face,* about face. It might be concluded from his view that at one time the Anti-Revolutionary party was sound, and has only lately deviated from sound principles. But as a native American, conditioned by American ideas rather than Continental ideas, we believe some of the basic ideas of the Anti-Revolutionary party were never sound. On some issues we are dealing, we have concluded, not with a *volte face* but with nothing more than the inevitable *harvest* from the seed sown by Abraham Kuyper.

Kuyper was a theologian turned politician. He lamented that he never had had training in the social sciences; he admits his own disqualifications. But after doing so, he then proceeds doctrinairely to talk on many subjects on which he obviously had no real knowledge.

Kuyper made the attack on the ideas of the French Revolution a great part of his program. Kuyper even named his party the Anti-Revolutionary party.

We select three features of the French Revolution for brief mention:

1. The hostility of the French Revolution to religion;
2. The liquidation of the French monarchy;
3. The claim of the French Revolution to the power of *regulating* the lives of its citizens for the *public* good.

1. With Kuyper we concur completely on item number one. We condemn the French Revolution for its heavy attacks on Christianity. (But the attack of the French Revolution on Christianity was not something peculiar to the French Revolution. Many governments have been hostile to Christianity.)

2. In contrast to Kuyper we have small concern with the liquidation of the Bourbon monarchy. We are not Continental in devotion to a royal house. This question of unseating a monarchy — one of the powers that be — leaves us uninterested. We are, therefore, indifferent to point two.

3. The third point is a very important point. The French Revolution was a *political* phenomenon. It must be judged politically. The political phenomenon was vitally concerned with two matters:

a. The relation of (human) government to God.

b. The relation of government to the people.

These are the two political issues posed by the French Revolution.

At this time we concern ourselves only with the second point, namely, what is the relation of government to its people. We expressed the same question differently earlier, namely, were the theorists for the French Revolution right when they argued that government has the proper authority for *regulating* the lives of its citizens for the alleged *public* good? Or, as we posed the problem in earlier issues of Progressive Calvinism, does the neighbor have legitimate claims (expressed individually or collectively) against any man beyond what Scripture teaches on the law of neighborly love?

To these questions the French Revolution said: Yes, the people have a claim against each individual which claim has no boundary. The individual must bow to the group. This is an interventionist and socialist and anti-individualist idea.

To these questions Abraham Kuyper also said: Yes, the government may make claims on each individual which claim goes beyond the claim an individual may have against another individual.

To these questions PROGRESSSIVE CALVINISM says: No, the government may make no claim on an individual, which claim goes beyond the claim an individual may have against another individual.

In short, on one of the two basic *political* questions posed by the French Revolution, Kuyper basically accepted an interventionist position. He was, on the real issue, unwittingly in the camp of the French Revolution.

Let us merely consider Kuyper's interventionist ideas on a very delicate subject, his idea of a *menschwaardig bestaan,* usually called in English, a living wage. He would not leave that to private charity. Oh no, that was a matter beyond private charity; it was a matter of taking by unscriptural laws from one to give to another. A government, he held, had that legitimate authority.

The French Revolutionists had the same idea regarding the proper authority of a government. The French Revolution led to an unscriptural society, to interventionism and socialism. The *volte face* of the Free University is exactly in the same direction. The fruit of the Anti-Revolutionary party's present ideas are the same as the fruit of the ideas of the French Revolution. If the fruit is the same, the tree must also be the same. If the Free University of Amsterdam is now presenting the same fruit as the French Revolution but with a Calvinist label, it is worth some space in PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM to show that basically the root of the French Revolution is the same root on which the interventionist and socialist ideas among so-called Calvinists grow.

If there is anything wrong in our acquaintance's statement about a *volte face* at the Free University, it is this: it is not really an about face; it is merely the inevitable harvest from a root which always was unscriptural, the root that the neighbor's claims are the standard for morality between men.

We intend to show in future issue of PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM, that Kuyper basically accepted the same *underlying political premise* as did the French Revolution. The Anti-Revolutionary party was misnamed.

The founder of the party was confusilated.

F. N.

Professor W. H. Jellema on: That Takes Study

In February, 1955, there was a homecoming program at Calvin College for old graduates. At four o'clock on February 25, there was a special lecture by Professor W. H. Jellema, head of the Philosophy Department, on the subject "The Golden Rule."

The lecture has interested us greatly. Here is a brief summary:

1. There is a naturalistic interpretation of the rule, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, and it is rejected as being the wrong one and impracticable. The natural interests of the neighbor constitute no claim or obligation on a person. The criterion, whether our own or our neighbors' natural interests and desires, is naturalistic or materialistic.

2. As the law states — we must love our neighbor as *ourself*. Now how are we to love ourself? The answer is that we must love ourself as God loves us. We must love in ourself what God loves in us. Hence, we must love our neighbor as God loves us. We have no obligation to serve our neighbor's natural interests. We must promote in him what God wants us to promote in him.

3. But what does God want promoted in our neighbor?

   (a) It requires more than just not harming your neighbor, not killing him, not stealing from him, etc.

   (b) The reason for institutions as Calvin College is to determine what God wants promoted in our neighbors. That takes study.

The foregoing summary may not be letter perfect but it summarizes, we believe, the thought structure of the lecture.

Let us give a little thought to the ponderous idea: That takes study.

Three thousand three hundred years after Moses and 1,900 years after Christ there is to be research at Calvin College on what

God wishes us to love in ourselves and so in our neighbor. That takes study!

It may be questioned how wise it is to develop a faculty and a school where they are at this late date engaging in some abstruse and occult study of what God wants us to promote in ourselves, and that *that* is the clue on how we should love our neighbor.

We are reminded in this connection of Milton's "grand infernal peers, who reasoned high" on various points, and concerning whom Milton wrote, "They found no end, in wandering mazes lost." The research project proposed will finally be in "wandering mazes lost."

The lecture presented some interesting points. Let us consider them.

1. Jellema declares that our natural interests and desires are naturalistic and materialistic, and hence that they are suspect. That proposition we consider to be wholly false. The desire for food is naturalistic and materialistic, but does that make it wrong? We in PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM are not ascetes (that is, we are not exceedingly self-denying and austere). We believe in living lustily and enjoying life. The rejoinder may be that the desire for food which is *necessary* for life is not bad, but the desire for really *fine* food is bad. Why should it be? Solomon wrote:

> Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God hath already accepted thy works. Let thy garments be always white; and let not thy head lack oil. Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of thy life of vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all thy days of vanity: for that is thy portion in life, and in thy labor wherein thou laborest under the sun.

Why should we not consider that to be good advice? Solomon says: eat well, drink well, wear good clothes, get a good haircut and good hair oil, do not be unhappy with your wife (it is an insult to her if you are), and be merry and live with joy. Why? Solomon says that if you cannot do that, why work!!

But Jellema indicates that the naturalistic and the materialistic are suspect, are fundamentally not to be trusted — or, shall

we say, are sin? Our own opinion is that this life become a completely abnormal torture house if the "material" is suspect or evil.

But there are two things about the material that we do admit are evil, namely (1) the getting of the "material things" of life *at the expense of the neighbor,* and (2) the appraisal of the material without relation to the Creator.

There is no merit, whatever, in our opinion, to the proposition that material self-interest is wrong. It is the *wrong pursuit* of material self-interest that is wrong. The second proposition is as different from the first as night is different from day.

If this first proposition of Jellema fails, then of course, all of his subsequent points based on it become fictitious. The unrealistic point about legitimate self-interest being untrustworthy is the device by which the subsequent fanciful points are able to be presented.

2. Jellema in his second main point adroitly steers clear of a bad reef. He declared that we do not have an obligation to serve the neighbor's natural interests. This keeps him clear of basically accepting the principle underlying communism and socialism and interventionism, namely, the principle that the neighbor has a claim on me. Whether we are quoting Jellema exactly verbatim we do not remember, but when he indicated that "I have no obligation to serve your natural interests" he was, we believe, indubitably and admirably right.

Having escaped that submerged reef, he comes to his major proposition (again quoting from memory): We must promote in the neighbor what God wishes us to promote in ourselves and consequently in the neighbor.

Now note what is happening to the argument:

1. The neighbor does not have a *materialistic* or a naturalistic claim on you;

2. The neighbor does have a spiritual claim on you. This claim must apparently be beyond the gospel, because the accomplishment of how to meet this claim requires *study.* We believe the gospel is clear enough not to need more study. Appar-

ently it is a spiritual claim beyond the gospel that needs research at Calvin.

We think the statement by Jellema about promoting in the neighbor what God wants me to promote in the neighbor means practically nothing. The expression is foggy. Let it be defined. We consider it to be undefinable.

PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM in earlier issues has specifically defined what our obligation is to our neighbors. We said it was to allow him liberty, cause him no harm, be forebearing and forgiving, show him charity when he needs it, and declare the gospel to him. We based those requirements on Scripture. We tried to omit nothing and to add nothing. If there is anything else — anything more of any kind whatever — that God wants us to promote to the neighbor, what is it?

Scripture, we believe, never went off on flights of fancy of what God wants promoted in the neighbor, *except the gospel.* There is nothing abstruse about that. What study does it need?

This proposition, that we must promote in the neighbor what God wants promoted in ourselves, is a decoy. The sole use of the idea is that it gets away from the *plain* common sense teaching of Scripture, and does make us the *servants of the neighbor on some vague, pseudo-lofty level.* The use of the idea is that it gets away from the last two words of the great commandment which last two words are not pious enough, thou shalt love thy neighbor *as thyself.*

Jellema is complexifying the law beyond Moses and Christ. He would have it, thou shalt love thy neighbor *as God wants you to love yourself.* If that is the law, why was it not put that way in Scripture?

If Calvin College is engaging in profound research to fathom what God wants me to promote in myself and in you let us hear what it is, and let us get this research out of the college laboratory and into everyday practice.

PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM is unsympathetic to all complexification.

F. N.

New Magazine, TOT VRIJHEID GEROEPEN (CALLED UNTO LIBERTY), in the Netherlands

The publishers of PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM did not expect that their periodical would be universally accepted. We expected criticism; we were prepared for haughty contempt. Both came. We gratefully acknowledge the encouragement which we have received in various ways from various sources.

We wish to call attention at this time to what appears to be a parallel publication which has just been begun in the Netherlands. The following is an excerpt from a letter sent to us by Mr. M. A. van Wijngaarden, secretary of the editorial staff of the new publication:

May 5, 1955

PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM, volume I, number 1, sent by you to A. Zijlstra, Groningen, The Netherlands, has been read also by me.

I was very glad to read your paper, and for two reasons. Firstly, being a Calvinist myself, I rejoiced reading a paper written by fellow-Calvinists. I can subscribe to your Declarations.

Secondly, you published your paper almost at the same time as we, in the Netherlands, issued the periodical *Tot Vrijheid Geroepen* (i.e., *Called Unto Liberty,* taken from Galatians 5:13). Judging from number one of PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM, I can say that you and we strive after the same purposes, standing upon the same basis. You can imagine my gladness when I read your paper!

* * *

About our paper I can say that (a rarity for Holland!) Christians of various church-denominations and political parties joined in the editorial staff and the contributors. I myself am one of the editors, at the same

time the secretary of them. I therefore write this letter also on behalf of our paper.

I should like it if we could work with you in the propagation of our ideas, to the glory of God Almighty.

We have read the first three copies of *Tot Vrijheid Geroepen* with profound approval. The paper is oriented to the post-war economic and political problems of the Netherlands and of what was formerly known as the Dutch East Indies (now misnamed "Indonesia"), and is showing special interest in the tragedy of the island of Ambon and the Ambonese. Those practical problems are not ours but as their kinsmen we take sympathetic note of them.

It appears to us that in regard to principles we stand on the same foundation as *Tot Vrijheid Geroepen* does. We are anxious to hear more of what these writers have to say. The editorial staff contains a galaxy of distinguished names of Dutch statesmen, theologians and scholars in various fields.

Tot Vrijheid Geroepen is the organ of the "Stichting Johannes Althusius,* or as we would say in America, Johannes Althusius Institution. As followers of Althusius the editors of this periodical are taking a decided stand against usurpation of power by the government.

As in our country so in Holland more and more laws, regulations, and ordinances find a place on the statute books regulating the conduct of business and labor. Freedom of movement in these spheres is being curtailed by *gebod op gebod, en regel op regel* ("line upon line, and precept upon precept"). A "police state" or a "police community" is gradually developing in which the citizens ultimately will be forbidden to do anything that is not specifically permitted by law. Such legislation, controlling action by requiring the prior issue of licenses, is contrary to the God-ordained way in which the government (which carries the sword) only makes laws to forbid that which is evil, restraining evildoers and protecting the just.

*Johannes Althusius was born in Westphalia in 1557, studied law in Basel, and as a staunch Calvinist jurist became the champion of the rights and freedom of the people against the usurpation of power by kings and princes, the government in the days of yore.

As in our country so in Holland the government adopted during the war years what were considered to be emergency measures binding the hands of free enterprise. The best we can say for this is that it was a "necessary evil" (a contradiction in terms), necessary only because of war. The loyal citizenry in all warfaring countries are willing to submit to reasonable war restrictions and rules, however with the understanding that such rules will be relaxed and finally removed, as soon as there is peace. The freedom-loving segments of every nation are anxious to return to unrestricted prosperity — restoring free enterprise. But the interventionists, the socialists and the communists (whose basic ideas are the same, although differing in practice) having had a taste of regimentation and enjoying the "benefits" of *so-called* "social security" and the many soft and lucrative jobs in the bureaucracy, are loath to let go of their prey which they have for years so firmly held in their economic grasp.

The people of Holland are suffering from the same interventionist burdens imposed by the government from which we suffer. The followers of Johannes Althusius are organizing for battle. They will not consider the state (government) as the pyramid of human culture. They hold to the Biblical view that the state (government) is there because sin marred God's creature, and can serve only as an emergency bandage to cover the wounds of humanity.

We welcome the appearance of *Tot Vrijheid Geroepen.* We are in full sympathy with its principles as mentioned above. May the Spirit of God give guidance to the brethren and may their work be crowned by God's blessing.

Any of our readers who understand the Dutch, and are interested in free enterprise based on Calvinist principles, should order a subscription. A good knowledge of the Dutch language is essential. Address: Zomerdijkstraat 1, Amsterdam Z, Netherlands. Subcription price: fl. 2.50 in Holland; $1.00 should suffice for U.S.A. and Canada.

J. V. M.

Information To Readers

I

We prepared four articles for this issue in order to illustrate the extent of confusilation and complexification in Calvinistic circles. But we overran our space and the fourth article is being held for a future issue, maybe sometime in the fall. The title of that article is: "A Common Grace Declaration; a Gentle Modification of the Harsh Calvinist Doctrine of Reprobation." We think the article outlines a very interesting confusilation.

II

Readers will have noted that PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM has a book format and size. Our plan is at the end of each year to bind the twelve issues in regular book form, and to advertise the books for sale.

Further, we are of the opinion that future readers will not understand the later articles unless they have read the earlier articles. As a general plan, therefore, we expect future members of the Progressive Calvinism League and future readers of PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM to acquaint themselves with the contents of early issues, before reading later issues. At the present time and for some time to come we are working only on the preliminary groundwork which we believe necessary for modernizing Calvinism, debarnacling it of very dangerous ideas, and making it sincere again, instead of having it present to the "world" a sanctimonious front, namely, "love" which violates the law of Scripture and which promotes coercion under the mask of legality.

III

We are prepared to send out 5,000 sample copies of this issue. If you wish sample copies to mail out to friends, we shall be glad to accommodate you as long as we have any copies left.

IV

In connection with all this confusilation and complexification, we remember our psychiatrist's Indian (mentioned in our March, 1955 issue), who had been looking all day for his tepee, but to no

avail. Night was falling, and he was completely lost. And so he sat down and grunted: "Indian not lost, tepee lost."

V

The next issue will be largely devoted to the relation of the individual to the state. We consider this a most important issue. We shall give the naive interpretation of "the powers that be are of God" a real "touch of high life."

VI

Prospective members of the Progressive Calvinism League know much more about us after reading seven issues. To those who are like-minded and have courage we extend another invitation that they join the league. One of these days the League will take steps to become active in practical fields. Be with us from the beginning. All who join in the first year will be considered charter members.

VII

PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM differs radically from popular present-day Calvinism, which has become confusilated. The cause of the confusilation is twofold: (1) the real meaning of the "law of God" has been lost (for example, coercion is not sin but is brotherly love) and in its place a vague and vicious theory of "love" has been substituted; and (2) the pseudo-science of the current age has been adopted as if it were a native "Calvinist culture."

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